

VERBS, PAST CONTINUOUS

THE PAST CONTINUOUS

The **past continuous** is used to indicate that the **actions or events were in progress for some times in the past**. Past continuous is formed with “**was**” or “**were**” plus a **present participle**. The present participle is the verb in base form plus the suffix **-ing**.

Past Simple

We went to school.

She studied English.

Past Continuous

We **were going** to school.

She **was studying** English.

Verbs in past simple describe actions that were complete or habitual in the past. Verbs in past continuous describe actions that took place over a period of time in the past.

When the past simple and past continuous are together in a sentence, the past continuous verb expresses the longer lasting action while the past simple verb conveyed a short, interrupting action.

I was jogging when she spotted me.

We were having breakfast when you called.

When they placed him in the ambulance, he was losing consciousness.

The news came when she was studying.

Practice1: Complete the sentence in the past continuous with the verb given in parentheses.

1. His friend _____ with him to work. (car-pool)
2. She _____ the floor. (mop)
3. Education _____ my future. (shape)
4. They _____ tennis. (play)
5. She _____ for dinner. (set up)
6. He _____ shelves at the supermarket. (stock up)
7. Everyone _____ for her attention. (vie)
8. I _____ good feelings when he was around. (have)
9. He _____ his parents over for dinner. (have)
10. I _____ myself. (be)

11. He _____ his beard. (trim)
12. The phone _____ continuously. (buzz)
13. Traveling expenses _____ into his earnings. (cut)
14. He _____ a big profit. (net)
15. She _____ the package. (tape)
16. They _____ polite. (be)
17. Uncle Bill _____ on his reserved energies. (tap)
18. She _____ the way he behaved. (approve)
19. The bees _____ by the thousands. (die)
20. They _____ on the grass when it rained. (lie)

Answers1:

1. His friend **was car-pooling** with him to work.
2. She **was mopping** the floor.
3. School **was shaping** my future.
4. They **were playing** tennis.
5. She **was setting up** for dinner.
6. He **was stocking up** shelves at the supermarket.
7. Everyone **was vying** for her attention.
8. I **was having** good feelings when he was around.
9. He **was having** his parents over for dinner.
10. I **was being** myself.
11. He **was trimming** his beard.
12. The phone **was buzzing** continuously.
13. Traveling expenses **were cutting** into his earnings.
14. He **was netting** a big profit.
15. She **was taping** the package.
16. They **were being** polite.
17. Uncle Bill **was tapping** on his reserved energies.
18. She **was approving** the way he behaved.
19. The bees **were dying** by the thousands.
20. They **were lying** on the grass when it rained.

THE PAST CONTINUOUS NEGATIVE

For negative statement in the past continuous, “**not**” is added after “**was**” or “**were**”.

I **was studying** algebra -> I **was not studying** algebra.

He **was making** an important decision -> He **was not making** an important decision.

She **was working** at the pharmacy -> She **was not working** at the pharmacy.

The dog **was napping** -> The dog **was not napping**.

We **were running** late -> We **were not running** late.

They **were having** a lot of second thought -> They **were not having** any second thought.

Notice: “any” is used in the opposite of “a lot”

Practice2: Change the sentences to past continuous negative statements.

1. His friend **was car-pooling** with him to work.
2. She **was mopping** the floor.
3. School **was shaping** my future.
4. They **were playing** tennis.
5. She **was setting up** for dinner.
6. He **was stocking up** shelves at the supermarket.
7. Everyone **was vying** for her attention.
8. I **was having** good feelings when he was around.
9. He **was having** his parents over for dinner.
10. I **was being** myself.
11. He **was trimming** his beard.
12. The phone **was buzzing** continuously.
13. Traveling expenses **were cutting** into his earnings.
14. He **was netting** a big profit.
15. She **was taping** the package.
16. They **were being** polite.
17. Uncle Bill **was tapping** on his reserved energies.
18. She **was approving** the way he behaved.
19. The bees **were dying** by the thousands.
20. They **were lying** on the grass when it rained.

Answers2:

1. His friend **was not car-pooling** with him to work.
2. She **was not mopping** the floor.
3. School **was not shaping** my future.
4. They **were not playing** tennis.
5. She **was not setting up** for dinner.
6. He **was not stocking up** shelves at the supermarket.
7. Everyone **was not vying** for her attention.
8. I **was not having** good feelings when he was around.
9. He **was not having** his parents over for dinner.

10. I **was not being** myself.
11. He **was not trimming** his beard.
12. The phone **was not buzzing** continuously.
13. Traveling expenses **were not cutting** into his earnings.
14. He **was not netting** a big profit.
15. She **was not taping** the package.
16. They **were not being** polite.
17. Uncle Bill **was not tapping** on his reserved energies.
18. She **was not approving** the way he behaved.
19. The bees **were not dying** by the thousands.
20. They **were not lying** on the grass, gazing at the stars.

Answers2: with abbreviation

1. His friend **wasn't car-pooling** with him to work.
2. She **wasn't mopping** the floor.
3. School **wasn't shaping** my future.
4. They **weren't playing** tennis.
5. She **wasn't setting up** for dinner.
6. He **wasn't stocking up** shelves at the supermarket.
7. Everyone **wasn't vying** for her attention.
8. I **wasn't having** good feelings when he was around.
9. He **wasn't having** his parents over for dinner.
10. I **wasn't being** myself.
11. He **wasn't trimming** his beard.
12. The phone **wasn't buzzing** continuously.
13. Traveling expenses **weren't cutting** into his earnings.
14. He **wasn't netting** a big profit.
15. She **wasn't taping** the package.
16. They **weren't being** polite.
17. Uncle Bill **wasn't tapping** on his reserved energies.
18. She **wasn't approving** the way he behaved.
19. The bees **weren't dying** by the thousands.
20. They **weren't lying** on the grass, gazing at the stars.

THE PAST CONTINUOUS QUESTIONS

For questions with the past continuous, “**was**” or “**were**” switches position with the **subject**.

Tom **was doing** homework -> **Was** Tom **doing** homework?

I **was making** good of my promise -> **Was** I **making** good on my promise?

She **was working** on her project -> **Was** She **working** on her project?

We **were having** a great time -> **Were** we **having** a great time?

They **were exhibiting** their works -> **Were** they **exhibiting** their works?

We **were betting** on his success -> **Were** we **betting** on his success?

Practice3: Change the sentences to past continuous questions.

1. His friend **was car-pooling** with him to work.
2. She **was mopping** the floor.
3. School **was shaping** my future.
4. They **were playing** tennis.
5. She **was setting up** for dinner.
6. He **was stocking up** shelves at the supermarket.
7. Everyone **was vying** for her attention.
8. I **was having** good feelings when he was around.
9. He **was having** his parents over for dinner.
10. I **was being** myself.
11. He **was trimming** his beard.
12. The phone **was buzzing** continuously.
13. Traveling expenses **were cutting** into his earnings.
14. He **was netting** a big profit.
15. She **was taping** the package.
16. They **were being** polite.
17. Uncle Bill **was tapping** on his reserved energies.
18. She **was approving** the way he behaved.
19. The bees **were dying** by the thousands.
20. They **were lying** on the grass when it rained.

Answer3:

1. **Was** his friend **car-pooling** with him to work?
2. **Was** she **mopping** the floor?
3. **Was** school **shaping** my future?
4. **Were** they **playing** tennis?
5. **Was** she **setting up** for dinner?
6. **Was** he **stocking up** shelves at the supermarket?
7. **Was** everyone **vying** for her attention?
8. **Was** I **having** good feelings when he was around?
9. **Was** he **having** his parents over for dinner?
10. **Was** I **being** myself?

11. **Was** he **trimming** his beard?
12. **Was** the phone **buzzing** continuously?
13. **Were** traveling expenses **cutting** into his earnings?
14. **Was** he **netting** a big profit?
15. **Was** she **taping** the package?
16. **Were** they **being** polite?
17. **Was** uncle Bill **tapping** on his reserved energies?
18. **Was** she **approving** the way he behaved?
19. **Were** the bees **dying** by the thousands?
20. **Were** they **lying** on the grass when it rained?